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[*on the report of the First Committee (A/71/450)*]

71/55. Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 70/50 of 7 December 2015, adopted on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, which was established to save succeeding generations from the untold suffering of the scourge of war,

Recalling also that the United Nations emerged at the time of the immense trail of death and destruction resulting from the Second World War, 71 years ago,

Recalling further the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which enjoin the international community, individually and collectively, to spare no effort in promoting the ethical imperative of "in larger freedom", so that all peoples may enjoy freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom to live in dignity,

Convinced that, given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks associated with a nuclear weapon detonation, Member States have long envisaged nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation as urgent and interlinked ethical imperatives in achieving the objectives of the Charter, which is reflected in the first resolution, resolution 1 (I), adopted by the General Assembly on 24 January 1946, aimed at the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction,

Acknowledging, in this connection, the ethical imperatives outlined in the provisions of its resolutions and reports and those of other related international initiatives on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks posed by a nuclear weapon detonation, including the declaration that the use of nuclear weapons would cause indiscriminate suffering and as such is a violation of the Charter and the laws of humanity and international law,[1] the condemnation of nuclear war as contrary to human conscience and a violation of the fundamental right to life,[2] the threat to the very survival of humankind posed by the existence of nuclear weapons,[3] the detrimental environmental effects of the use of nuclear

[1] See resolution 1653 (XVI).
[2] See resolution 38/75.
[3] See resolution S-10/2.

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weapons,[4] and the disquiet that was expressed at the continued spending on the development and maintenance of nuclear arsenals,[5]

Acknowledging also the preamble to and article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons[6] and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons,[7] in which the Court unanimously concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control,

Acknowledging further the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[8] in which Heads of State and Government resolved to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving that aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers,

Concerned that, despite the long-standing recognition it has accorded to these ethical imperatives and while much effort has been directed to addressing nuclear non-proliferation, limited progress has been made in meeting the nuclear disarmament obligations required to achieve and maintain the nuclear-weapon-free world that the international community demands,

Disappointed at the continued absence of progress towards multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, despite unrelenting efforts of Member States towards this end, and the lack of concrete outcomes of multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations within the United Nations framework,

Noting with satisfaction the increasing awareness, renewed attention and growing momentum that has been generated by Member States and the international community since 2010 regarding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks associated with nuclear weapons, which underpin the ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world, together with all related international initiatives,

Conscious of the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in relation to nuclear disarmament, and determined to promote multilateralism as essential to nuclear disarmament negotiations,

1. *Calls upon* all States to acknowledge the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks posed by a nuclear weapon detonation, whether by accident, miscalculation or design;

2. *Acknowledges* the ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world, which is a "global public good of the highest order", serving both national and collective security interests;

3. *Declares*:

(*a*) The global threat posed by nuclear weapons must urgently be eliminated;

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[4] See resolution 50/70 M.

[5] See A/59/119.

[6] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 729, No. 10485.

[7] A/51/218, annex.

[8] Resolution 55/2.

(*b*) Discussions, decisions and actions on nuclear weapons must focus on the effects of these weapons on human beings and the environment and must be guided by the unspeakable suffering and unacceptable harm that they cause;

(*c*) Greater attention must be given to the impact of a nuclear weapon detonation on women and the importance of their participation in discussions, decisions and actions on nuclear weapons;

(*d*) Nuclear weapons serve to undermine collective security, heighten the risk of nuclear catastrophe, aggravate international tension and make conflict more dangerous;

(*e*) Arguments in favour of the retention of nuclear weapons have a negative impact on the credibility of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime;

(*f*) The long-term plans for the modernization of nuclear weapons arsenals run contrary to commitments and obligations to nuclear disarmament and engender perceptions of the indefinite possession of these weapons;

(*g*) In a world where basic human needs have not yet been met, the vast resources allocated to the modernization of nuclear weapons arsenals could instead be redirected to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals;

(*h*) Given the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, it is inconceivable that any use of nuclear weapons, irrespective of the cause, would be compatible with the requirements of international humanitarian law or international law, or the laws of morality, or the dictates of public conscience;

(*i*) Given their indiscriminate nature and potential to annihilate humanity, nuclear weapons are inherently immoral;

4. *Notes* that all responsible States have a solemn duty to take decisions that serve to protect their people and each other from the ravages of a nuclear weapon detonation, and that the only way for States to do so is through the total elimination of nuclear weapons;

5. *Stresses* that all States share an ethical responsibility to act with urgency and determination, with the support of all relevant stakeholders, to take the effective measures, including legally binding measures, necessary to eliminate and prohibit all nuclear weapons, given their catastrophic humanitarian consequences and associated risks;

6. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-second session, under the item entitled "General and complete disarmament", the sub-item entitled "Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world".

51st plenary meeting
5 December 2016